

# Creating Baby Spaces in Public Libraries: designing for success

1/27/2015



**Creating Baby Spaces**

Designing for Success  
Presented by: Bridget Alexander

An Infopeople webinar Tuesday, January 27, 2015

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**Poll**

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**The Benefits of a Connected Parenting Community**

Why do we want to offer programs that build a community of families?

Dr. Brazelton's Touchpoints work indicates that normalizing the challenges of parenting makes for healthier, less stressed parents and children.

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## Evolution Favors Community

Evolutionarily people evolved to share the work of raising children.

- Experienced parents support new parents
- Many adults engage with a child so parents can replenish reservoirs of patience and engagement
- A higher ratio of adults to children ensured each child had support in facing the challenges of growing and learning

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## Connected Families Benefit Us All

When families are connected, they invest in their neighborhoods, school, and libraries.

- Lens shifts from what is good for our family to what is good for our community
- Child experiences diversity of parenting styles and family cultures
- Institutions benefit from engagement

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If we want to connect with families,  
we need to design programs for babies.

and they need to be more than  
a story time with a song.

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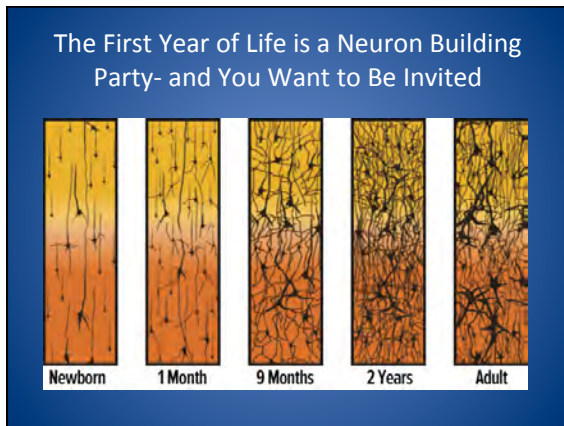
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The Development of Visual, Auditory, Tactile, Motor, and Vestibular Centers

- In endless studies, development of these sensory centers directly correlates to IQ and future learning success.
- Windows of developmental opportunities in these centers open and close throughout infancy and early childhood.
- Developing these centers requires active engagement that looks different from what we conceive of as educational.

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If we don't offer opportunities and show families the value of play and engagement, there are plenty of corporations that will happily step in and do the job- badly.

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## Advocating for Play

Libraries are an accessible institution that can model the power of play and arts engagement.

- Educate parents that play is an evolutionary, child directed impulse to pursue activities that develop the sensory centers on the timeline that works best for that individual child

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## Play is Learning!

- Adults forget that nurturing the motor and sensory centers behind reading, writing, and calculating is the true work of early childhood.
- Children naturally work these systems in play.
- Libraries can set up environments that invite play and the sensory development that promotes literacy and future learning.

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## Letter Recognition Can Wait!

In infancy and toddlerhood, we want to automate the motor, auditory, and visual skills that lead to fluid reading and writing.

This includes:

Tracking	Interactive Language Games
Grasping	Vowel/Consonant Sounds
Pinching	Rhyme Recognition
Focusing	Line and Shape Recognition

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This means developing literacy looks like this



Tracking Bubbles and Developing Finger Strength

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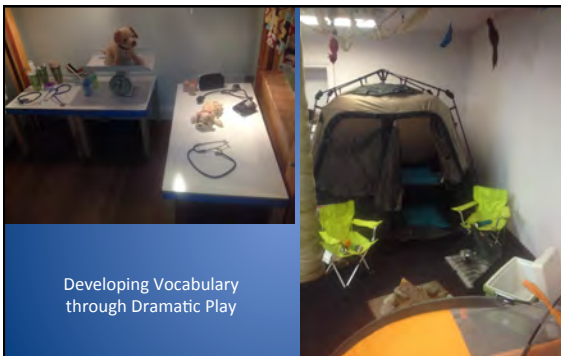
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Developing Vocabulary  
through Dramatic Play

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Developing focus, grasp, letter recognition,  
shape recognition, and color recognition.

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## What are the Challenges of Programming for Infants?

- a) They can't do much and they eat the play dough.
- b) They barely follow the plot lines.
- c) They want us to sing to them. We don't sing.
- d) They rarely come without highly energetic siblings attached.
- e) They always come with grown ups attached.
- f) Nearly everything in the environment can be either fallen off of or used to hit someone.
- g) All of the above

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## The Solution: PROCESSED BASED ART

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## Process Art

- Allows each child to define how they want to engage
- Ensures every child can find a developmentally meaningful way to engage
- Invites experimentation rather than mastery of specific steps or skills
- Inspires focus and allows for layers of complexity.

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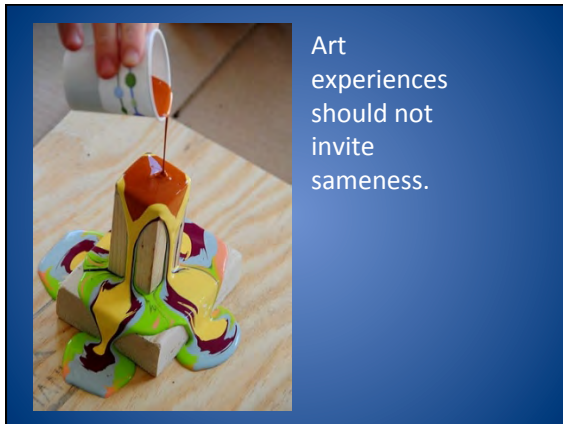
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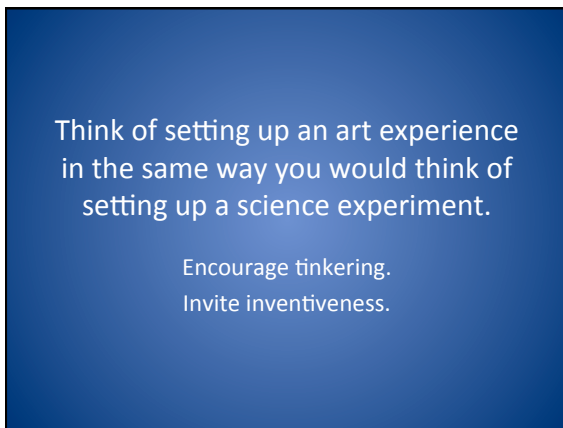
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Spend lots of time in the space where science meets art- and resist the urge to explain everything!

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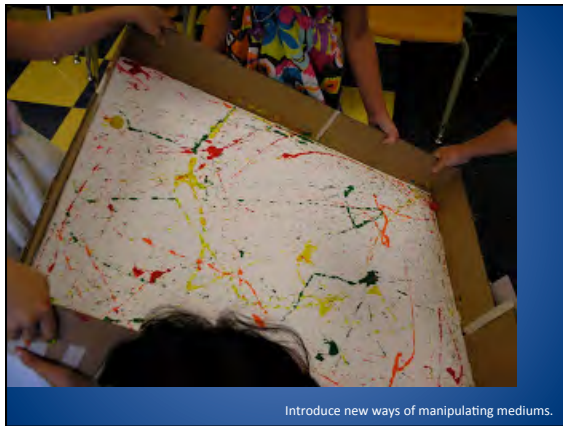
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If there's a wrong way to do it-  
**IT IS NOT PROCESS ART.**  
**IT IS PROBABLY NOT ART AT ALL.**

## Great Process Based Art with Infants

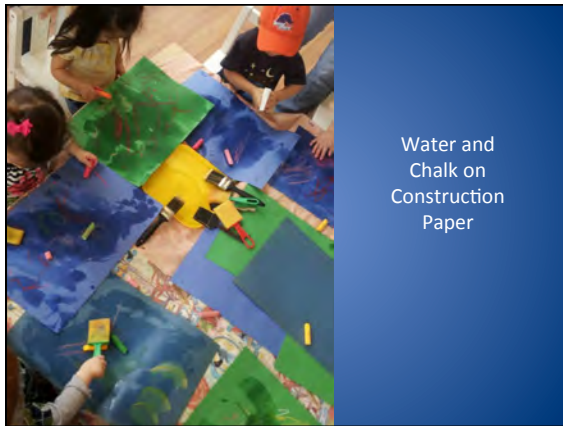
- Adaptable projects that accommodate the huge range of development within the first 12 months.
- Active learning rather than passive receiving.
- Baby gets to drive engagement.
- Works WITH the babies' development impulses rather than against them.
- Allows engagement of any length of time.



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Water and  
Chalk on  
Construction  
Paper

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Tracing and  
Decorating Baby

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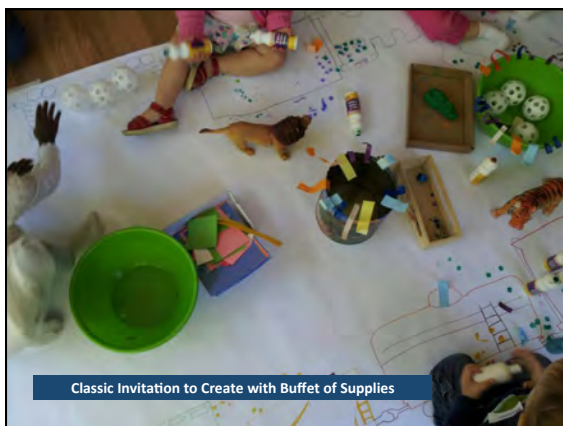
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Classic Invitation to Create with Buffet of Supplies

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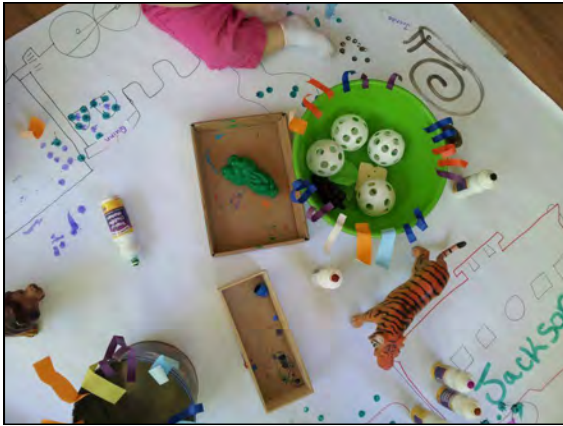
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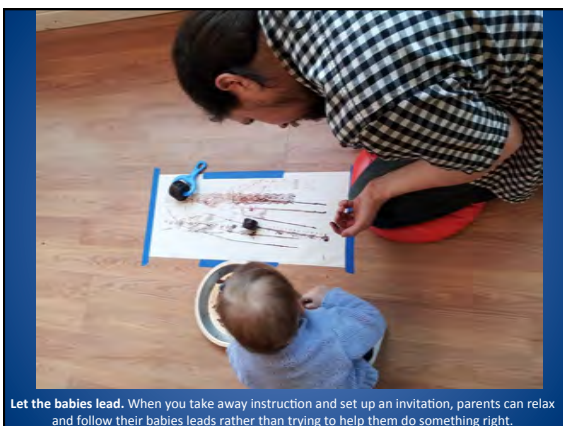
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**Let the babies lead.** When you take away instruction and set up an invitation, parents can relax and follow their babies leads rather than trying to help them do something right.

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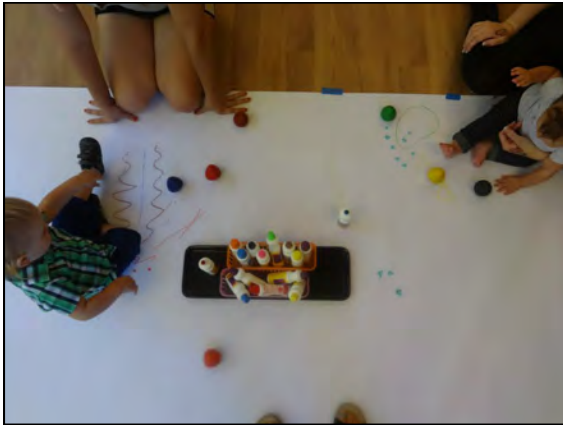
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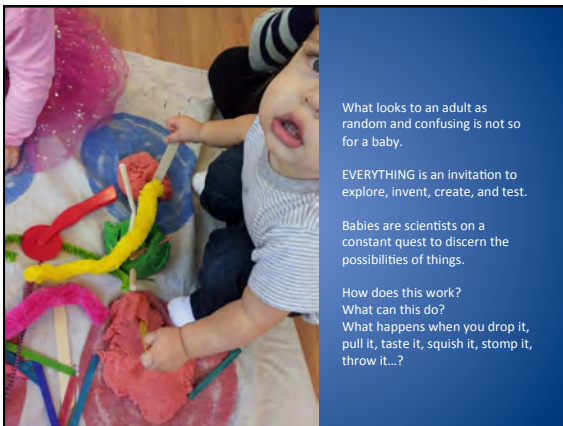
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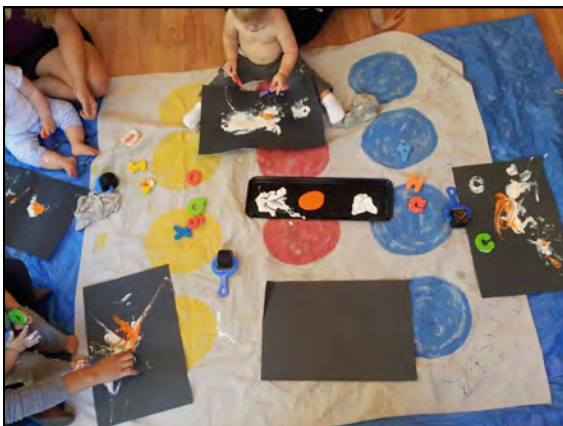
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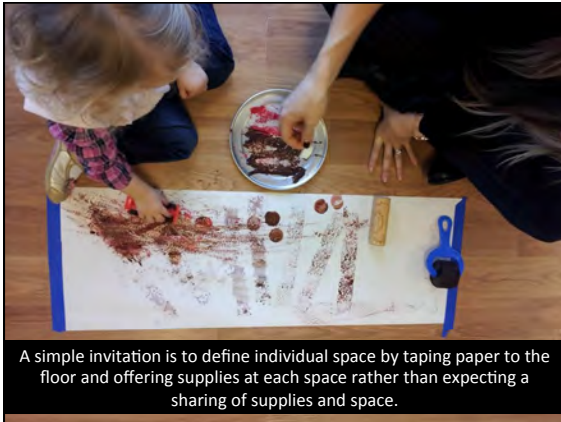
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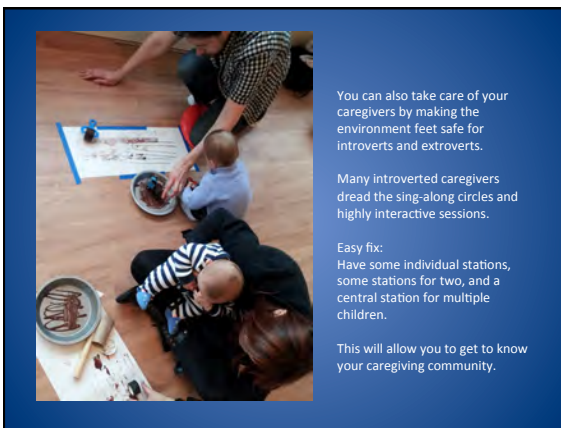
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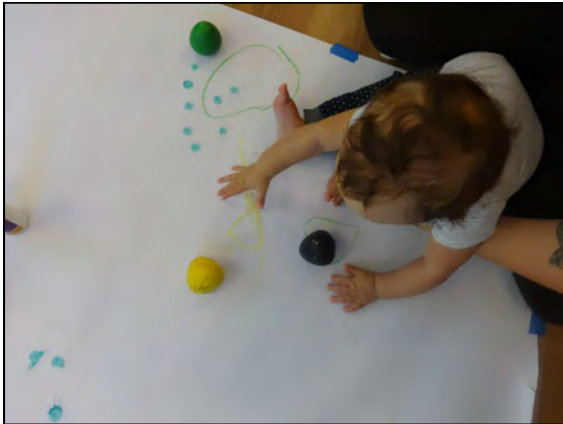
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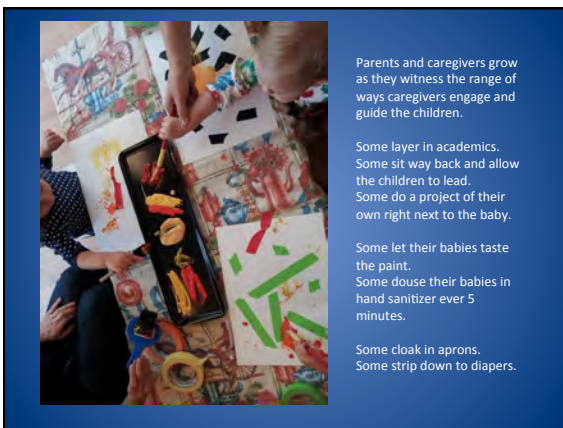
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Parents and caregivers grow as they witness the range of ways caregivers engage and guide the children.

Some layer in academics.  
Some sit way back and allow the children to lead.  
Some do a project of their own right next to the baby.

Some let their babies taste the paint.  
Some douse their babies in hand sanitizer ever 5 minutes.

Some cloak in aprons.  
Some strip down to diapers.

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Use supplies that offer spectacular effect with little physical exertion.

Crayons need to be pressed hard. Markers require a developed grasp.

Great supplies:  
Liquid Watercolors  
Dot Markers  
Foam Brushes  
Coffee Filters  
Tissue Paper  
Tempera Paint  
Cars and Balls to Roll Paint  
Colored Masking Tape  
Doughs  
Charcoal  
Clay  
Round Crayons

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Community is Inevitable

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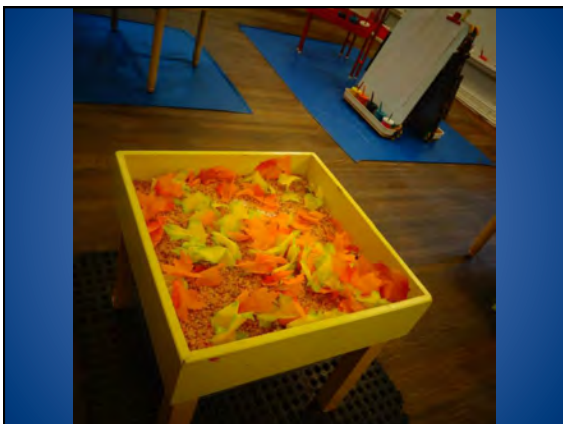
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## Sensory Tables

Scientific exploration stations  
only with glitter and feathers



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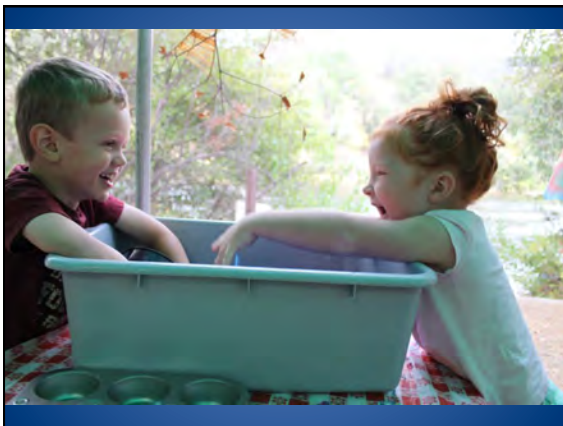
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**Cloud Dough**  
8 cups flour  
1 cup oil

**Moon Sand**  
4 cups sand  
2 cups cornstarch  
1 cup water

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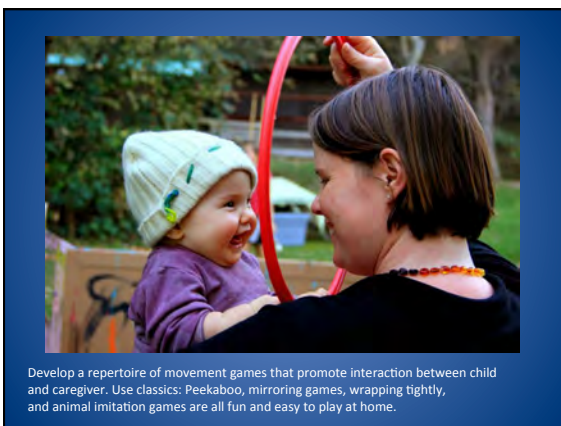
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## Movement



Devote time to both  
gross and fine  
motor activities.

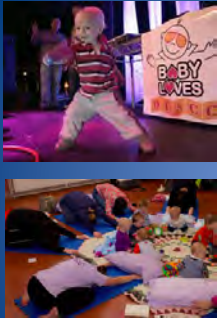


Develop a repertoire of movement games that promote interaction between child and caregiver. Use classics: Peekaboo, mirroring games, wrapping tightly, and animal imitation games are all fun and easy to play at home.

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Your library can make accessible and inclusive activities that are too often reserved for children of privilege.

Offer the latest enrichments that EVERY parent wants to give their child:

Yoga	Martial Arts	Infant Massage
Dance	Tumbling	Art and Music

The intro level on ALL these can be lead by staff that have completed simple trainings.

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Most of all, continue to think of the invitation. It's challenging to LEAD movement activities. It's easy to set up invitations and step back.

Examples of Inviting Movement:

- Drum Circles
- Obstacles Courses
- Masking Tape Courses
- Crawling Courses
- Bubble Machines
- Disco Balls Light Play
- Chalk Course
- Parachute Play
- Dance Party/Freeze Dance
- Silk Scarves and Ribbon Play

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Fine Motor activities allow children's curiosity to drive development of the fine motor pinch and grasping skills needed for future writing and tracking.

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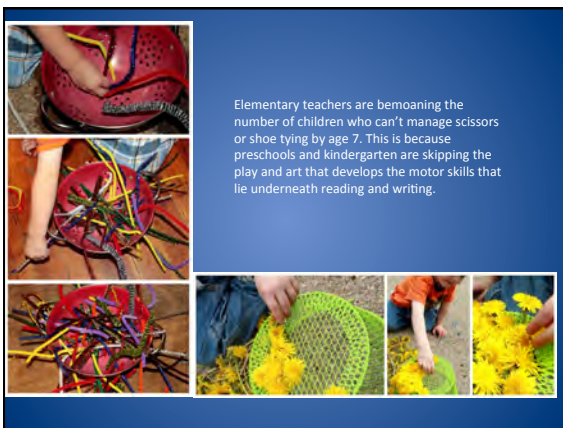
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Elementary teachers are bemoaning the number of children who can't manage scissors or shoe tying by age 7. This is because preschools and kindergarten are skipping the play and art that develops the motor skills that lie underneath reading and writing.

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Clear Contact  
Paper Collage

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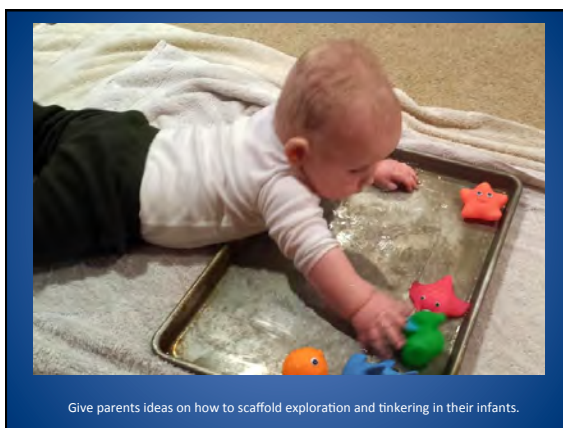
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Give parents ideas on how to scaffold exploration and tinkering in their infants.

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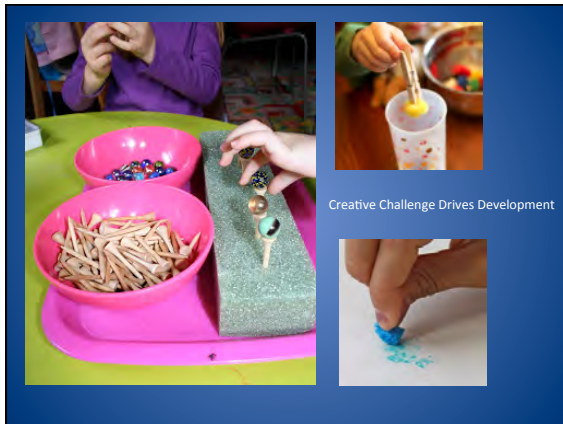
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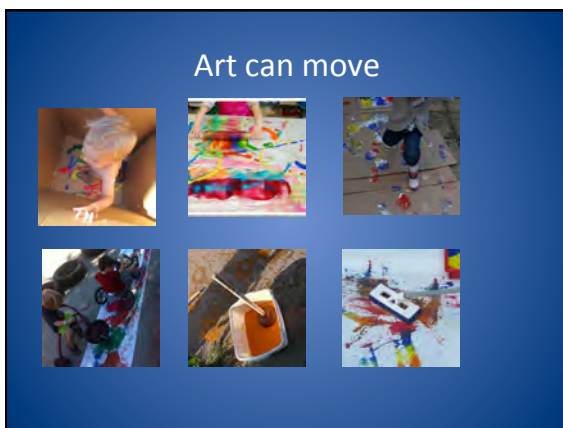
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## Challenges of siblings, parents, and infancy

The right project- and good set up-  
eliminates the greatest challenges.

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## The Cardinal Rule: Set up an invitation

Focus on mediums  
Pick good supplies  
Step out of leadership  
Set up defined space for each pair  
Set up community space

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## What Space Do You Have for Programs?

- A) We have a separate community room.
- B) We can create space within the library.
- C) We have an outdoor space.
- D) We can travel to other sites to deliver programs.
- E) We have absolutely no space whatsoever for programs.

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# Creating Baby Spaces in Public Libraries: designing for success

1/27/2015

## Keys to Launching a Successful Library Program for Infants

Rule 1: Develop existing staff. Don't waste a dime on "experts and artists."

- Identify the staff person who is great at building relationships.
- Play to strengths.
- Offer training to develop a workshop leader: Music Together, ECE Classes, and Conferences.
- Allot staff time to develop workshops and get supplies. Curriculum developer may be different than workshop leader.

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## Rule 2: Pick a regular time and stick to it.

- 10 am is our most successful time.
- Avoid nap and meal times.
- Allow lots of time for it to develop momentum. Word of mouth will drive its success.
- Run the program with the same teacher so that relationships develop.

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## Rule 3: Promote Wisely

- Title it: Baby and Me to indicate age bracket.
- Profile with photos on your Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter page of the babies engaged in activities. Parents will share photos and spread word.
- Parent groups on social media can work wonders.
- Promote by highlighting that week's medium.
- Book titles and teacher photos do not bring people in!
- List separately on free community calendars.

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## Rule 4: Stick with Process Art

- Spend 2 minutes at opening highlighting how the activity ties into development.
- Spend 2 minutes empowering caregivers to facilitate the process.
- Process art will allow you to accommodate crowd swells as well as low turn out. Supplies are easily reused.
- Process art allow will accommodate older siblings.
- Process art will accommodate a range of attention levels.

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## Rule 5: Get ahead

- Start a Pinterest Board and pin 30 activities right away. Consider making it public.
- Stock up on standard process art supplies: paint, brushes, paper, sensory items, tarps...
- Pick 1 or 2 more ambitious play elements to create each year.

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## Examples of Library Programs

- Art Beast in the Libraries throughout Sacramento: Weekly art for all programs as well as one time workshops
- Catch 'em in the Cradle: Empowering parents as first teachers
- Lisle Library outside Chicago: Process based art pinterest board and programs.

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Chat:  
What Amazing Library Programs  
for Infants Have You Seen?

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## Excellent Internet Resources for Art Inspiration:

Pinterest: Search Process Art  
Teacher Tom  
Red Ted Art  
Play at Home Mom  
Magic Onions  
Artful Parent  
Tinkerlab  
Make Zine and the Makers Movement  
Child's Play Music  
Bev Bos  
Ooey Gooley  
Explorations Early Learning  
Reggio Children Inspired Facebook Page  
Let the Children Play Facebook Page  
Rebecca and Andrew Facebook Page

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## Sources for Supplies

- Discount School Supply: Enter the word museum in discount code line for 15% off
- Nasco Educational Supplies
- RAFT: Resource Area for Teaching
- Explorations Early Learning
- KODO Kids: Overpriced good ideas
- Ebay

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# Creating Baby Spaces in Public Libraries: designing for success

1/27/2015

## Thank You

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